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Site Fact Sheet
Little Elk Creek
Area-Wide One Cleanup Program Pilot Project
Sand, Gravel and Stone Site

Elkton, MD 21922

ORIGINAL

Property Description

The Sand, Gravel and Stone Superfund Site is located north of U.S. Route 40, approximately 3 miles west of Elkton, Maryland. The Site consists of approximately 60 acres in the Eastern Excavation Area of a 150-acre former sand and gravel quarry.

An underutilized industrial park located along the Little Elk Creek in Cecil County, Maryland has been selected as an Area-Wide Pilot Project under U.S. EPA's One Cleanup Program and Land Revitalization initiatives. The goals of the Little Elk Creek Pilot Project is to address a widespread groundwater contamination problem stemming from multiple industrial sources within a geographic area and. support development and reuse needs of the surrounding community.

Property History

From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, the Site was used for the disposal of industrial and solvent recycling wastes. The dumping prompted citizen complaints due to odors, which eventually lead to an investigation by State officials and the end of disposal activities. More recently, under the direction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, potentially responsible parties (PRPs) have performed various investigations and cleanup activities.

Environmental Investigations

EPA's decisions on how to address Superfund site contamination are formally outlined in legal documents known as Records of Decision (ROD). EPA issued its first (Operable Unit One or OU1) ROD for the Site in 1985. The selected remedy included fencing the Site, excavating buried drums and taking them off-site for disposal, and installing and operating an interim pump-and-treat system for shallow groundwater. In 1988, a group of 40 PRPs entered into a Consent Decree with EPA which established the terms under which they would implement the ROD. The fence was completed in 1989, and the excavation and removal of approximately 1,200 drums was completed in 1992. The groundwater collection and treatment system has been operating for approximately eight years. More than 88 million gallons of water have been treated to date.

EPA issued a second ROD in 1990. The Operable Unit Two (OU2) ROD addresses groundwater in the deeper aquifers at the Site. The ROD calls for on-site and off-site groundwater monitoring, the provision of an alternate water supply should Site-related contaminants be found in any private water supply well, and the recovery of ground water in the deeper aquifers should contaminant concentrations exceed the action levels given in the ROD. Forty-two PRPs signed an Amendment to the 1998 Consent Decree, agreeing to do this additional work.

During the first few years of monitoring, one residential well was found to contain site-related contaminants; this well has been replaced with a deeper well. Contamination has also been found in wells that monitor the aquifer directly below the contaminated shallow groundwater bearing zone. Contaminated groundwater is being pumped from this aquifer and treated on-site. The extent of the contamination is being delineated and additional monitoring is being conducted in order to plan additional cleanup responses.

In 2002, EPA issued the third and final (Operable Unit Three or OU3) ROD for this Site. The final cleanup plan includes: excavating contaminated soil; treating this soil on-site using low-temperature thermal desorption; backfilling treated soil; expanding the recovery and treatment system for shallow groundwater and continuing its operation; and adding safe substances (e.g., molasses or oxygen) to the groundwater in order to facilitate the breakdown of hazardous substances by soil microbes.

Contaminants

Benzene, chlorobenzene, chlorinated solvents and 1,4-dioxane have been detected in subsurface soil and/or groundwater. Surface soil in a limited area is contaminated with pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and metals.

Cleanup and Next Steps

EPA Region III is currently negotiating the performance of the final phase of cleanup under the Superfund program with a group of PRPs. Upon the successful completion of negotiations, the PRPs will perform the cleanup activities specified in the ROD for OU3 under the direction of EPA with assistance from the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Lead Agency and Contacts

EPA Region III is currently negotiating the performance of the final phase of cleanup under the Superfund program with a group of PRPs. Upon the successful completion of negotiations, the PRPs will perform the cleanup activities specified in the ROD for OU3 under the direction of EPA with assistance from the Maryland Department of the Environment.

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